Spiritual Principles (1)

114 1. A few comments on the spiritual principles of the Bambara (in particular on the dya and the nyama) have been collected in the chapter entitled "Théorie des âmes" by Tauxier, La Religion bambara (pp. 14-25), in which the author appraises the works of the Abbé Henry and of Ch. Monteil. Some of the observations made in the following chapter have been summarized by the author in "La Personne chez les Bambara" and in "Note sur le tere chez les Bambara /Note on the Tere among the Bambara/."

It will be useful to compare this study of spiritual principles with the studies made among the Dogon and presented respectively by M. Griaule, S. de Ganay, and the author in Masques Dogon, Les Devises des Dogon, and Les Âmes des Dogon.

761 The Soul, ni, and the Double, dya:

776 Faro controls the principle of life in water, which is his realm as well as the life-giving element par excellence. In the bodies of [826] living beings, this principle has its seat in the blood. The blood of the sacrifices offered to the spirit (or failing that, the juice of the tomato, a transformation of blood) is a contribution to the reservoir of life controlled by Faro—life which he redistributes in all its forms throughout the universe. Water is the privileged element in which life may persevere indefinitely. Elsewhere, life is maintained only if water comes to nourish it.

761 Faro's creative function is materialized by each marital partner
776 eating a tomato before sexual relations. This act is accompanied by
842 the recital of a prayer. The juice of the fruit, which contains the
833 body of the future child, transmits life according to the following mechanism:

761 Faro receives the offerings of tomatoes grown ritually in the
776 consecrated fields, as well as the blood of victims slain in his name
842 above the waters. Blood and juice, spreading over water, the fertili-
824 zing agent, are collected by the swallow, Faro's airborne messenger. Liberated in space, they return to the soil with fertilizing rain and penetrate the tomato seeds which thus contain a particle of generative power.

774 his consciousness, as well as that part of his being which, through the body, makes him sensitive to events. If man is vulnerable through his double, it is his tere that is affected by any breaking of taboos; it receives and submits to impurity.

826 The tere has its seat in the blood and the head (kun tere). It develops in the foetus in the course of gestation and is composed in part of the parents' tere to which is added that of the deceased person whose soul and double the child has inherited.

774 The appearance of the child's tere is determined by the old men
553 of the family in the course of the name-giving ceremony which takes
787 place publicly on the eighth day after birth. After carefully examining the child's hairline along the forehead, the manner in which his eyebrows join, the shape of his eyes (the seat of intelligence), mouth, hands, and feet, one of the old men present announces in a loud voice the revealing signs of his character. The position of these signs makes it possible to say whether a child has a good or a bad tere and to make predictions about his life. A slight bald spot on the middle of his head will make him a rich man; a wide and deep skull will make him a chief. The old man then swings the child in the direction of the four cardinal points above the family altars and gives him the first name of the deceased person whose ni and dya he has inherited. Some of the hair, shaved off shortly before, is then thrown into the Niger by the father who pronounces the name while facing the river. The gesture and the word are meant to entrust the tere to the spirit of the waters and to ask his protection. On the same day the blacksmith marks out on the child's face the scarifications that act on his tere, giving him strength, courage, and virtue.

774 As the child grows, certain of his physical peculiarities are inter-
787 preted as characteristics of his tere. If he grinds his teeth while
828 sleeping it means he will attack his parents; if he often takes hold of his left wrist with his right hand he will always be victorious. A girl who walks swinging her hands and throwing them behind and who raises dust with her feet while walking will destroy her husband's fortune. Some informants say that a person has several tere: /62/ one for his manner of walking, one for the way he carries his head, one for the shape of his limbs, and one for the breasts if the person is a woman (1).

1. The physical signs determining the tere are very numerous. On this subject see

The wanzo

718 The wanzo, an evil force created in the beginning by Mousso
304 Koroni's impurity, was caused by the curse, of which she was the object after her betrayal, and which she communicated to the earth during her underground journey. After she had maimed herself on Pemba while having sexual relations with him, her jealousy pushed her into avenging herself on the women who mated with the balanza. Her madness and despair prompted her to pursue her betrayal to the very end. With nails and teeth she excised and circumcised the men and women she met during her travels. The wanzo she carried about thus penetrated the human species, making the operation necessary for all those to follow. Faro could not remedy this, but his protection is invoked for each child during the operation. The headdress of the circumcised symbolizes the sky and the purifying light.

At birth, each child receives the wanzo, "the word of Mousso Koroni," in its blood and on its skin at the moment of contact with the earth on which it is born. This force, also called kono nyama, "the nyama of the inside," is not to be confused with the tere but is of the same nature and is transmitted to everything the bearer touches.
[826] Its seat is mostly in the foreskin of the man and the clitoris of the woman, and it represents the disorder in the individual: "it makes man such that he can live with no one, can stand no one, and cannot stand himself." In addition, it is opposed to fertility.

In order to become a stable individual, to marry, procreate, and to sacrifice, the child must be rid of his wanzo. This is achieved in the course of circumcision or excision and in the rituals that end the seclusion of those operated upon. The greatest part of its force runs into the earth with the blood of the mutilated organ. The rest of it escapes with the smoke of the fire over which the children jump (three or four times according to their sex) before returning to their homes. The act of abandoning their /65/ old clothes and putting on new ones at that time confirms their new status. But the wanzo does not disappear; it is channeled into the masks of the ndomo society to which the uncircumcised belong (1). Similarly, when a child dies before being

1. See p. 222.

circumcised, appropriate rituals have the effect of channeling the

778 wanzo and directing it into the mask to prevent it from doing harm
304 (1). Thus, nothing of the individual forces is lost. The wanzo itself,

1. See p. 256.

harmful at the beginning, when properly channeled and directed, serves to consolidate the collective energies of the infantile societies based on it.

[582] Only when an adolescent has lost his wanzo is he permitted to marry; any individual would refuse to marry a partner who is not completely rid of it.

The Body

•86 The Bambara have a notion of their bodies and the role of the different parts and organs. This notion is all the deeper because it is linked to that of the spiritual principles that animate it.

Indeed, the tere is determined by certain visible aspects of the body, while the ni and the dya also have sexes like the body. Therefore any study should include the links that unite the spiritual elements to the physical body in order to understand properly its state and function.

Blood, which together with breath is the seat of life, is also the vehicle of physical and spiritual forces that circulate with it in the veins and arteries. The blood sacrifice liberates these forces which sustain the altars, the soil, and the beings who receive them. Certain alliances are consecrated by an exchange of blood. The clear color of blood is proof of its purity: all infractions bring about a
[841] change and cause it to become pale. Menstrual blood, testimony to Mousso Koroni's impurity and of the momentary sterility of women, is the principal taboo of the supernatural powers that create and protect life.

826 The head, which contains thought, is an essential part of the in-
828 dividual and his symbol: "the head of the members of society" is
827 represented by a stroke in the course of the rituals performed by members of the Komo or the Kwore. Man grows through his head just as a plant "grows through its head bud" (2). Man's head is protected

2. The myth mentions the "head of the balanza" at the time that men broke the

826 838 [827]

taboo by cutting its buds (see p. 43). The altars of the fields and of agricultural societies, too, watch over the "head of the millet."

/66/ and purified in order to maintain his health and prosperity. It is the seat of consciousness and will, and receives a share of the scarifications made at birth, which will exercise influence on the person.

826 Hair contains an important part of the individual's ni. It is therefore dangerous to mix it with the hair of another, for that would create a vital and indissoluble bond between the two parties. To burn it is equivalent to making an attempt on one's own life. It is buried or placed in a deep hole in the wall of the house for protection (1).

[832 789]

1. Many charms and magic spells are based on hair. In order to be loved by a woman, a man must mix some of her hair with his and place it under his head at night with a prayer. In order to keep his job, an employee does the same with his hair and that of his employer; he then sacrifices a victim over the ensemble so that the employer cannot fire him without risking his own life.

Hair and the pilose system play a part in the myth and were used to count the age of primitive men until the advent of death on earth. All the ancestors represented in the sanctuaries are bearded and hairy. Their appearance shows that, having become mortal, they lived at a time when rejuvenation no longer existed.

826 827 The pupil is the fundamental part of the eye. Its name, nyemani, "little person of the eye" (2), expresses its function. The pupil re-

2. Man's pupil, according to information that is still obscure, was made with that of the serpent and was also called nye mani sa, "serpent of the little person of the eye."

flects and absorbs the person it sees. The image is a kind of double,

826 827 a replica of the person seen, the double being received and preserved by the seer with the help of the registering mechanism of the eye. It is with his eyes that Faro inscribes in his memory the number of beings under his domination. It is through the eyes as well as through the genitals that woman is united to her husband during the sexual act. The individual who has broken a taboo is affected first through the eyes: he suffers from pains or becomes blind according to the degree of his offense.

The nose is the canal of man's breath or, respiration, ni na kle (literally, soul that ascends and descends), a term describing the very movement of life. The seat of breath is the solar plexus, kwa nye, "eye of the chest," also said to be ni dyuru ba, "the great rope of the soul." When Faro decides to take back the life of a man, he carries him off into the water and returns his corpse with the nose and the navel cut up. The mutilation of the nose reminds all that, as the master /67/ of the guilty man's life, he takes it away from him by taking away his breath.

The mouth and the tongue play a part in all the rites and symbols concerning the person. The voice is "in the throat" but man talks with the mouth. The word is a creator, an act; it carries a force, nyama, which inhabits the mouth, permeates the tongue and saliva, and transmits itself to everything it touches. It is Faro's word passing through the mouth, the word received in suffering in mythical times, which integrates the human species with the new order established in the creation.

Its organ is the tongue which, when represented in ritual objects, symbolizes it (1). Its vehicle is saliva: to spit is to give one's word,

1. The prayers recited during the initiation rites allude to the formidable nyama of the initiates' tongues.

to seal an oath. The old men spit on seeds, after having promised an offering to the Komo; the sacrificing priest, before the libation, spits prechewed kola nuts onto the altar. Husband and wife spit their marriage oath. The power of the mouth finds its most powerful expression in the griot's recitation of the device (2).

2. See p. 112.

826 827 The mouth and tongue, ejectors of the word, can be compared in importance to the ear, a receptive organ. It is through the ear that man receives and remembers the word. Its role is comparable to that of the sex organs which eject life and receive it. The ear in itself has both sexes: male by its auricle, female by its orifice. This duality expresses the basic duality of man. That is why the corpse of [764] an uncircumcised man is sometimes amputated at the ear rather than at the foreskin.

826 301 Because of the symbolism of its shape and because of its function, the ear is adorned. Men formerly wore three copper rings on the right ear and four on the left, the number seven representing the complete being, male and female, ni and dya. Women wear four rings on each auricle or, if they can, twenty-two, which represent the twenty-two stages of creation, or the twenty-two generative categories. Sometimes, for both men and women, a single ring attached to the earlobe represents the mother of the other rings (1).

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1. In olden times, men and women wore cowrie shells on their ears in the place of copper rings, a custom which would seem to be still respected in certain villages today. These shells played the same part as copper.

827 191 301 776 But the role of this adornment goes much further. As symbol of the word, it is through the ornaments that the spirit Téliko, master of sound, hears what /68/ is said to man. They attract sound and send it back to Téliko and Faro, who thus judge the acts and words of men. To wear earrings did not originally mean to adorn oneself, but to hear the spirits as well as to force them to hear what was said (2). Its second effect is to embarass the liar, the bearer of false news

2. Rings placed on musical instruments have the same purpose and also symbolize those worn by men. See p. 282.

or evil words, by putting him in the position of being understood by the invisible, therefore of being judged by them. A pleasant or well-intentioned word benefits the one to whom it is addressed and this

827 191 381 776 gain is felt as a contribution to the beneficial nyama. "The spirit Téliko transforms the air emitted by the speaker into favorable nyama; upon hearing a good word, it would be necessary to stop one's ears so that this nyama does not leave the person who received it." Moreover, if a person opens his eyes wide while watching the speaker, "the latter's nyama is able to penetrate the body of the listener" and spread within it as a reviving tide. While this takes place, the good word saturates the air, helping the action of breathing, hence the life, of the listener. "One breathes," says an informant, "with the nyama of the words which enter through the eyes and ears." But this process is not one-sided. The good nyama returns to the speaker through his own eyes while he is looking at the other person. He is reflected in the person with whom he is talking and it is as though he were talking to himself. There is a beneficial exchange even when only one of the two actors speaks.

Inversely, a bad word or an insult upsets the listener and rebounds, acting upon the insulting person. This harmonious arrangement summarizes precisely and powerfully the universal movement, principle of life and strength for all beings. It comprises an individual movement provoked by the word which acts upon the body by developing and regularizing the rhythm of breathing, and a collective movement set off by the return of the word to the speaker. Because of the effect of the spoken word, exchanges are established that are favorable both to the rhythm of individual breathing and to the equilibrium of universal life. This effect is not limited to words in the strict sense; sight enjoys the same prerogatives as hearing and diction. If an object [431] belonging to a certain person is seen and coveted by another, the owner cannot refuse to give it to him. The act of seeing has established by itself, between the stranger and the object, a bond which is affectively stronger than that of ownership.

• 836 The articulated parts of the human body are just as meaningful as the head. The bones, more lasting than the flesh /69/ and a testimony, in the grave, of the life that has passed, are its foundation and framework.

The navel is the central point of the articulations: that is why Faro, when he drowns a person, returns the body after having slit the nose and navel. This double mutilation shows that he has reclaimed the head and the body of the guilty man. The articulations are the indication of man's condition in the new order. Where he was once

826 immortal with smooth limbs, he became mortal and hard working. As seats of the male semen, they transmit this condition to the embryo, formed in the maternal womb by Faro. The weariness felt in the limbs after the sexual act is proof of this transmission. As Locus of [839] the virile semen, framework of the man, and a mechanism suitable for physical labor, the articulations are also the symbol of society. The chief's throne, in the shape of a knee, is the image of its owner's articulated body as well as that of the armature of the social body and of the grouping of individuals under his jurisdiction (1).

1. See p. 178.

826 823 201 The limbs represent the right and the left. Rectitude, firmness, and directed action are "right"; incertitude, the spirit of indecision, and inconsistency in behavior are "left." The right is male and symbolizes man's labor; the other is female. All gestures, profane and religious, and all representations of objects bear witness to this. Performing his first task in the fields before the rain, the farmer gives three blows with his hoe held in his left hand in order to absorb the impurity of the earth. After this, he works until the harvest with his right hand. To cross one's hands means supplication, to put them behind one's back means humiliation.

826 201 576 Each finger has its value. The little finger, bolokoni lakare, is "the son of the other fingers" and in it is concealed the entire strength of the hand; it "carries the nyama of the fingers." Hence its use as a measure of divinations. To point to someone with one's little finger means to belittle him with respect to those present. Thus one casts a spell (korti) against an enemy or an undesirable person with the little finger.

826 622 The index finger and the thumb of a chief, formerly those of a king, are marked on certain occasions with signs called bolo ti doniya, "knowledge of the signs of the hand." On the index are drawn three "acts of the world today" (bi dyɛ̃ walew) and on the thumb, two "things of the interior of the secret world" (dyɛ̃ gundo kono fɛ̃w), for it is said that "the knowledge of the signs of the hand /70/ is the road of the creation 5, the index is the world in 3 and the thumb is the new world" (1). The whole represents the worlds thought out by

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1. Bolo ti doniya ye dali duru sira ye, bolokoni kumba dɔ̃ga ye dyɛ̃ saba gundo ye, tyemasa bolokoni ye dyɛ̃ dura ye.

yo, of which only the first is realized (2).

2. On the worlds thought out by yo, see pp. 23-26.

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On another level, the signs of the thumb are related to powers and those of the index to royal domains (fig. 1, nos. 8-12):

1. Sign zero (fu) represents the beginning of creation, the origin of all things. A curved segment extended from left to right denotes the dynamic quality of the universe. It is intersected by a multiplication sign expressing the infinite development of beings and things. But the vertical stroke crossing it on the left indicates both the cessation and the suppression of the whole (no. 11).

2. Sign of lightning. It expresses royal power and justice and is traced under the thumb ring of the king. The latter, when giving an order, would swing his hand, which means he is swinging lightning before those he addresses (no. 12).

3. Sign of the royal domain. The opening asserts the possible extension of the kingdom; the transversal bar is a protection of this kingdom from all destruction (no. 8).

4. Sign of the extension of this domain at the tree cardinal sides: east, west, and south (no. 9).

5. Sign of union. The oval represents the whole group of functionaries called tɔ̃dyɔ̃ and barodɛ̃, officers and councilors who administer the kingdom under the king's authority (no. 10).

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As the feet are constantly in touch with the soil, they take on its impurity. An individual who has gone through severe purifications will need to avoid putting his feet on the ground during a period of time occasionally quite prolonged, for "to place one's toes on the ground is to put one's soul in contact with the impure earth" (1). It

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1. The invention of the shoe is mythically linked to the notion of the earth's impurity; the wearer must therefore avoid this contact.

[A22, category 116 — Analyst.]

826 is also through the feet that a part of man's strength is deposited in the sweepings and rubbish upon which he treads. Their role as receptacles appears in the rituals concerning household refuse and the dirt on roads and paths.

Like the little finger, the small toe symbolizes the whole person. [301] It is sometimes adorned with a silver ring, symbol of the word, which recalls that man's body is the seat of the word extended within him from head to feet (1).

1. In olden times the ring on the small toe was made of red nyama fiber (nyama fu), which played the same role as metal.

831 The notion of the bisexuality of human beings is fundamental:
826 the spiritual principles are sexed like the body, whose ambivalence /71/ is evident during childhood: the boy is feminine in his foreskin; the girl is masculine in her clitoris. One of the aims of circumcision [304] and excision is to help the child attain the sex to which it is apparently destined by removing the organ of the opposite sex. (2) But the

[171] 2. The same conception is found among the Dogon; see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, p. 185.

initial duality of the soul and body is the very foundation of the human being. He is complete only if he originally received it, and he retains it even after the operation imposed by physical and social life, [774] for the soul of the opposite sex, though diminished in the body, remains present in the shadow, the dya. He also rediscovers his dual unity when he marries. A married couple are a unit for their dya [581] join as do their bodies in an act which is not merely physical and which realizes the ideal union of twins.

831 The sex to which one belongs dominates one's whole existence on
801 earth. Objects and tools bear masculine or feminine marks, according to the rules of the division of labor. The numbers three (man) and four (woman) are abridged forms of the sex. "Primitive men" who, according to the Bambara expressed themselves mostly by gestures and signs, engraved their rare objects with the number of

831 lines or dots depending upon the sex of those who used them. Thus,
801 women marked their spindles with four lines whereas men twisted three threads on their shuttles.

826 On the metaphysical level, man's body, "the seed of the world," is identified with the cereal grain. The Bambara separate cereal
824 grains into seven parts, corresponding to a division of the human
812 organs into seven groups (1). Man and grain are one and identical in

1. The divisions of the grain are as follows: kungu, "little beard of millet," involucre; fara dye, "white bark," glume and glumales; fara fi, "black bark," bran and protein aceous bark; fara mugu, "farinaceous bark" (which corresponds to a milky diastatic zone); mugu dunta, "flour for eating," starch; kolo dye, "white bone," embryo; kise de, "son of grain," the micropyle from which the rootlet issues at the time of germination. The classification of organs in relation to these divisions is under study. We thank M. Pitot of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire for the identification of the parts of the grain corresponding to the native divisions. In certain villages, grains
[782] undergo a process of hulling and the determined elements only are used in the making up of the ritually offered millet mash.

their substance. On the other hand, the basic foods, that is, the eight principal cereals, are symbolically present in the collarbones (kolo kalanjiri, or ka kolo). Man carries within him his subsistance, and its location reflects the person's general condition (2). As proof
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2. See p. 53, n. 2.

of /72/ man's spiritual integrity, these grains leave him when he is in a state of impurity. He is then drained of his substance and subsistence. Thepurpose of purification is to reestablish this wholeness.
812 Moreover, the bonds which unite the whole person, body and
561 spiritual principles, to the cosmos, are made clear by the fact that

845 Up to the time they are twelve, the children bathe themselves preferably in the Niger. They supposedly can walk on water and never run the risk of drowning.

The twins do not become separated from each other any more than the dya is separated from the living being to which it is attached. They wear the same clothes and eat the same food simultaneously. Formerly male twins married the same woman. If one of them dies 845 at an early age, the blacksmith carves a small wooden doll called 778 flanitokele, which takes the name of the deceased and which the mother puts on the mat next to the living child. The latter takes this doll with him at the time of his circumcision and keeps it during the period of his seclusion in order to bring it back to the parental home whence it is never removed. When he marries, he sticks the doll into the earth along with another piece of wood symbolizing the wife of the deceased. Since twins are in a sense a living replica of Faro, none can bother them without showing disrespect to him. On the other hand, they are the object of attention and precaution on the part of their family as well as their neighbors. Their presence is always beneficial. Considered invulnerable, twins used to march ahead of [728] troops in times of war and would serve as inviolable intermediaries between the warring parties during truce.

The Hermaphrodite

826 The hermaphrodite, being both male and female, is to all extent and purpose his own twin. Consequently, he has no dya (1).

[825 304] 1. The hyena is considered a hermaphrodite; it can engender or conceive, depending on its size and strength; "the stronger impregnating the weaker." A tattooing system is based upon this belief.

/88/ The Albino

[143] Albinos of light or reddish skin and red hair are called gombele or yepege, this latter term being reserved for those who show the most accentuated characteristics.

826 The albino is supposedly born of sexual relations which took place 833 in the middle of the day when the sun is in the koblenkaba, sky of

826 [833] Faro's wrath—a fact which constitutes a serious breaking of taboo. The consequence of this is to coalesce in the maternal womb the twins originally granted to the woman by Faro and to decolorize the skin of the being thus formed. Because of this fact, the albino, the embodiment of twins, does not inherit the spiritual princples of a deceased person and is also a new being given to men by Faro. But the impurity he has acquired increases tenfold his tere and his wanzo, [304] which are so active that the circumciser must sacrifice on his own personal altars before performing the operation. From the ambivalence of the albino, originally of the same essence as Faro but fallen because of the impurity transmitted by his parents, stem various customs and representations. (1).

1. This ambivalence is also at the root of the belief that the albino is a being formerly provided with wings and able to fly (see p. 68, a quality he lost after his contact with the impure soil.

826 718 His body is believed to be endowed with special powers. The person who owns his skull will have a numerous family and prosperity; his hair brings wealth; the marrow of his bones provides gold and copper. If he is made to sit at a place where bones are buried, whatever one asks for is granted. His excrements, mixed with seed, have the effect of increasing the harvest for the year.

826 782 Because of the value attributed to the albino he is a choice victim for the sacrifices to Faro. His nyama is such that he can be sacrificed without prayer, the act itself constituting an efficacious invocation. Lacking living albinos, men often tried to appropriate the remains of a buried body.

/89/ Chapter 4

SACRIFICE AND THE ALTAR

782 To call upon spiritual forces and to influence them, the Bambara use prayer, offering, and sacrifice. They perform oral and manual

782 rites in all places at all times. They pray to the sky, to the cardinal points, and to the spirits; they sacrifice on rocks, on the earth, on trees, in water holes, as well as on altars sheltered in the sanctuaries, or located in private or public places. Every circumcised adult, father of a family, or owner of a house and arable land can be a sacrificer whose qualification is underscored by the red stain which sometimes adorns the walls of the main room of his house (1).

1. See pp. 171ff.

To the uninformed observer these rituals cover a great network of apparently unrelated beliefs. But actually it is otherwise. The rituals stimulate definite movements of forces which are integrated with those of the world.

Without trying to give a general picture of the manners, the times, and the places peculiar to Bambara rites, it is nevertheless important to study apart one of the most important mechanisms, namely the blood sacrifice. It constitutes the framework for the rituals and brings into play the principles and elements composing the living being (see preceding chapter), for it must be noted that the first sacrifices stated in the myth were human sacrifices.

A sacrifice takes place when the blood of the victim runs over a substance or an object containing the force of a supernatural power or of an ancestor. The words of the prayer pronounced during the immolation dedicate the victim to the power that comes to nourish itself on the blood according to popular belief. At the same time, they direct the life forces which escape from the body. The soul, ni, is channeled by the altar and will be kept there until resurrection. Its nyama, which gains in power as /90/ the agony is prolonged, is also retained by the altar whose strength it increases. The victim is thus completely emptied of its spiritual principles for "all the nyama are in the blood" (2) which it abandons.

2. Nyama be bi dyoli la.

782 In all cases, the sacrifice represents an exchange: the sacrificer
826 receives in return a part of the strength of the one whom he supplants (3). The blood is the carrier of an active, dangerous element left on

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3. The mechanism of blood sacrifice among the Bambara is comparable to that observed among the Dogon and described by M. Griaule, "Remarques sur le mécanisme du sacrifice dogon (Soudan Français) /Remarks on the Mechanism of Dogon Sacrifice (French Sudan)/, " Journal de la Société des Africanistes. Vol. 10, 1940, pp. 127 ff.

the altar. At the time men gave the balanza their blood, they would let it dry and then, licking the trunk with their tongue, would reclaim it after it was rid of the element constituting the offering. All their active forces passed into the tree and a substance, almost totally lacking in vitality was returned to them.

782 The blood sacrifices which were originally instituted on the trunk of the balanza are actually performed in the most varied sites: earth, trees, ponds, wells, etc. Moreover, as the Bambara developed their technology, they would sacrifice on those objects, utensils, or contrivances which they discovered or invented such as the forge and its tools, the loom, and agricultural implements.

782 The Bambara also have altars which may be classified into three
778 categories:

1. The wood stumps called pembele, which represent Pemba. Many heads of families or of religious societies keep one of these (1).

1. See p. 77 for a description of the pembele altars.

A unique sanctuary at Massala is a pilgrimage center for Bambara from all regions who come in great numbers to take part in the annual sacrifice. Besides pembele, it contains two large pots, da, covered with sacrificial blood, which give the sanctuary its name. It is in this place that ordeals are executed, judicial questions settled, and serious illnesses treated.

2. The altars, made of stones crudely cut and occasionally engraved, have their origin in a mythical stone, issued out of the seventh part of the earth, and situated under the mound where Faro's female twins were born. Having a red color, it was itself a symbol of sacrifice. It divided itself and gave birth to all other sacrificial stones (Fig. 5 and Pl. V. b).

782 As an example we will summarize below the ritual killing of albinos as it was practiced under the royalty. This underlines the mystical value of the victim and is an excellent example of the mechanism inherent in sacrifice; it brings out the ritual value of the details on each of which the Bambara place particular emphasis. Finally, it confirms the value and symbolism of different parts of the body as described in the preceding chapter.

782 /95/ The kings of Ségou were formerly provided with albinos by a man from the village of Pelengena who kept them prisoners and set 826 them aside for this purpose. But this man exploited them by shaving their hair and selling it to the chiefs of neighboring villages as symbols of the men whom, sooner or later, they could reckon to have under their domination. The chief, having counted his subjects, war prisoners held as slaves as well as captives received as tribute, would prepare as many small sticks as there were men; then he would mix up these sticks with the hair and bury them all in the wall over the sill of the entrance to his home. The hair is supposed to represent beforehand an increase in the subjects of his domain and to help bring in the taxes.

But the albinos themselves were kept for the king who sacrificed them to Faro in cases involving the affairs of the kingdom.

1. When the king found himself in difficulties of an administrative nature, the victim was cut in half through the middle of the body at the level of the abdomen by means of a rope of the da fiber (1); his

[283 824]

1. Hibiscus. The nyama fiber was considered impure and could not be used for the albino.

cries, gestures, and excrement were considered the vehicles of a nyama which "would eliminate the difficulty encountered by the king." No one was supposed to hear his cries which were not intended for human ears but for Faro, to whom suffering was also due. The king, above all, should not hear the screams under penalty of failing in his enterprise, and yet he had to be present at the torture and watch it with complete detachment.

The lower half of the victim's body was Faro's due. It was carried to the Niger by three men if the victim was a male, or by four if it was a female. One of them carried the body on his head.

782 While keeping his eyes and his left hand closed, he walked without
826 touching the ground with his toes in order to respect "the soul of that which he carried (1). At the edge of the river, the joints were broken,

1. To touch the ground with one's toes amounted to putting the soul of the victim's body in contact with the earth's impurity (see p. 102).

the marrow extracted and poured into the water. After placing their toes on the body, to "give a part of their soul to Faro," the men deposited it gently in the river, into which it sank while they loudly proclaimed the reason for their action. When they returned to their master, they brought him the spirit's gratitude and a little water from the river, which was poured over the royal seat (2).

2. This offering was called nasi, "well-being."

/96/ The upper part of the victim's body was the king's and used for the needs of the state. The tõdyõ first blew into the mouth of the tortured victim so that the "air, in coming out, would take all his words to Faro." Then they buried his head under the king's throne and danced to the rhythm of drums.

In case of war, the blood which had spilled during the sacrifice
[726 was collected by the tõdyõ and dried in the sun; then the residue was
789] carried away and before the assault was thrown in the direction of the town to be attacked. The king who advanced with his army found, according to the formula, "his sacrifice before him" (saraka bla ñe).

782 2. In case the king was short of funds, the killing took place
826 towards the west and was performed by sticking a bamboo stick into the throat of the victim so that blood would run over the cowrie shells
789 which the king had earned himself "with his own sweat." Thus consecrated, the cowries "attracted gold, silver, and copper to the royal treasury."

The head was placed under the throne. The chest and lungs were dried, reduced to powder, and preserved in a bag which the king kept. When he received his tax-payers, he smeared his face and mouth with this powder, thus forcing the visitor to give. He rubbed his body with it before going to war, causing the warriors to say:

782 "To see the king is to see gold" (1).
826
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1. Fama yele ye sanu yele ye.

He gave some of it to his wives and children who put it in their drinks in order "to inherit his place and his goods." This powder was offered at each sacrifice to Faro in order to fertilize the kingdom.

3. When a family was plagued by numerous deaths, they asked
782 the king to authorize the sacrifice of an albino whom he furnished
826 himself. The victim's tongue was dried, pounded to powder, seasoned
266 with pepper, and eaten by the father of the family to permit him to "reclaim the words and the nyama of the deceased." The nose was swallowed by the mother so that she might "reclaim the breath of the dead children." The father then ate the broiled eyes to "preserve lost sights." The dried ears were hung above the sill of the entrance "so that death, upon hearing the funeral wails, might not return." The skull was retained as a token and buried in the courtyard; a wooden stick marked the burial place. The rest of the body was thrown into the Niger, "for an ordinary man does not have the right to keep that which is reserved for the king."

If the king permitted it, chiefs of the important villages /97/ also
782 placed the body of an albino under their seats "in order that their
826 authority be solid and enduring" (2).
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2. Sometimes the sum total of the taxes raised in a village were given the parents of an albino in exchange for the child. Those who could not obtain a victim used an animal bone as a substitute and performed the ritual as though it were an albino. Regarding the chief's seat, see p. 178.

782 In certain serious cases, the albino was sacrificed on the altar of
826 Komo. This sacrifice was accomplished in silence for "a prayer unknown to the person sacrificing is in the blood of the albino" who is powerful enough to act without words.

773 564 326 412 778 are removed from the sanctuaries, honored, and replaced before the Komo altars during the agricultural and funerary rituals; to fail to observe this rule would constitute the breaking of a taboo and entail the most serious disorders.

In the course of the annual ceremony consecrating the dead, these tools are carried to the cemetery and receive as many victims as do the dead, for they represent the ancestors.

The kotigi brings them to the same place on two other occasions: during the agricultural ceremonies carried on after the growth of the ear of corn and after threshing the harvest. Axes and hoes are presented one by one at the tombs of the dead and then, reunited in the center of the cemetery, each of them is used once to cut a branch or to dig the soil. This ritual gesture recalls the use which the ancestors made of them.

The Forge

326 826 The blacksmith establishes his workshop under a shed, usually located in one of the squares or at the entrance to the village. It is the simplest of its kind and involves a minimum of equipment. The forge represents the craftsman: the furnace his body, the bellows his testicles, the blast pipe his penis, the fire his head. When the red hot metal is beaten with the hammer, a replica of the gosilande, which symbolizes the universe, the sparks are the lightning and thunder bolts.

326 778 The altar of the forge, sometimes situated to the west of the hearth, contains blackened hoe, pickaxe and axe handles, coal (fininkoro, literally, old coal) ashes kneaded with clay (buguri, literally, ashes of the hearth), all of which belonged to former owners, and finally an axe kongobwona called "mother of the altar," a smaller replica of the ancestral axes.

The bulk of the wood which holds the iron hooks and the blade /120/ is hollowed out and forms a kind of storage divided into three compartments.

The upper one contains money so that whatever happens, the blacksmith will have means to live.

In the central compartment are placed copper and iron, metals which the blacksmith works, as well as water, basic element and preferred seat of Faro, master of the word.

778 794 532 On one of the walls, small lines representing the ancestors and a broken line representing the human person are drawn with millet mash; on another, engraved with a sharp point, is a schematic geometrical figure of the ancestral home; it is accompanied by the silhouettes of two hands (see Fig. 10, 1 and 2), the hands of the living, "crossed and reaching out to the world of the dead." The left hand, symbol [826] of disorder, incertitude, and the variations of human conscience, is placed below to the right of the other to recall man's obligation towards his right hand, symbol of order, righteousness, fidelity, and work (1). Thus arranged, the hands express complete submission of

1. In making this drawing the following words are repeated: "I place my right hand on the wall night and day," neben kinin bolo da koko la ɔ̃u ni kle.

the living to the ancestors.

Farther away are drawn the divisions of the universe (Fig. 10, 3) with the help of a square divided into three compartments symbolizing from top to bottom: the sky and water, the air, the earth.

In the upper square to the left, a line represents Faro in all his power, sole master of sky, water, and life. A horizontal line recalls his domination over the world. The lines that follow are his children. The total indicates the feminine form of the spirit.

All individual or family sacrifices offered to Faro are performed over his sign which the officiator rubs with copper and crushed tomatoes in order "to thank the spirit who protects his dya, and to pray to the spirit to give his wife children."

The central rectangle is the domain of Téliko: air and wind. The small line which vertically bisects the square on the left represents the spirit attempting to penetrate into Faro's plan to vanquish him. His defeat is indicated by the fact that the major portion of the line is situated in Téliko's domain, since the latter violated only temporarily the boundaries of his adversary.

The lower rectangle outlines the earth, seat of the Soba spirits. The row of 22 short lines which covers it recalls the 22 elements of creation, "the 22 things indispensable to man in this world."

On another wall, fire is indicated by two whips: that of Faro, lightning, and that of Komo, the law. They also recall "the power

622 778 of polished stone called fara yele, "stone that rejoices," expresses the wish that the chief's rule prosper.

The seat, taken as a whole, represents the chief's skeleton and his joints. It is erected upon various elements which sum up his ties to the ancestors and the supernatural powers, indicating his responsibility and contributing to the maintenance of his strength. It is situated in such a way that all the events in the courtyard take place around it. and that nothing which is said is out of earshot. As a center of the family household, as the symbol of the industrious and responsible man, it is the framework of the community which it upholds, just as the chief does through his physical endurance and moral firmness. The whole village "leans upon the chief's joint."

Each morning and evening, the ǰigi ba ǰigi and the ba ǰigi /137/ are greeted so that the chief may be strong, that his family may increase, that he may foster the ancestral beliefs. Offerings and [782] libations are made upon the seat and upon the body of the chief when his authority is questioned. In (b) tomato juice is being poured; in (a), representing the elbow or the knee, the water which has been used for ritual bathing of these same joints; at the foot, in (n), the fowls' throats are cut while the officiator, before pouring down the blood of the sacrifice, blows into a small hole dug in the ground; finally, in (l) the water which was used to wash the chief's whole body is poured in.

[826] In this way the chief's joints, which are the seat of his strength and his procreative seed, are purified and fortified.

II. Village Cults

794 The village, as a physical entity, and its inhabitants are placed under the protection of the supernatural powers and of the ancestors. Faro is directly invoked at all water spots.

If the village is situated at the river's edge, the rituals are addressed to the Faro tyin. If it is not too far from the bank, the inhabitants go out to make their offerings to the spirit. Frequently, the stream, pond, or natural well, which often determined the site chosen by the founders, is though to be inhabited by an incarnation of Faro whose name is revered and to whom all offer a cult.

On the other hand, each village is placed under the protection of the dasiri, a special spirit delegated by Faro.

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3. If the village has no Komo, the name may be given above the paternal Kuafebla.

two jars of millet beer, a ram which will be sacrificed, and money to the griot who will sing during the ceremony.

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826] A lock of the newborn's hair is shaved off and kept in a case (sebe) which, before being carried away, will be hidden in an oil container for the following reasons: to protect the person from magical practices; to prevent a donkey from eating it, an occurrence which would cause the child's death; to permit him to seek for himself health and a long life in the image of his hair which will have remained in good condition.

The rest of the hair is carried by a female relative to the river, into which it is thrown in honor of Faro. Next a band of white cotton called faro fini (literally, Faro's clothing), on which someone has "spat" kola nut juice, is bound around the forehead of the newly baptized baby to indicate his subjugation to the spirit.

The senior elder then examines with attention the hairline and the meeting point of the eyebrows on the forehead before announcing in a loud voice the signs determining the child's character (tere). Then he grasps the child and swings it /179/ seven times from east to west, eight times from south to north above the altar while giving it the forename (toko) which he has inherited from a dead person along with the spiritual principles (1). The griot recite the father's genealogy

1. According to another source of information, the eldest son receives the forename of his paternal grandfather, the second son that of his father, and the following sons those of the mother's fathers and grandfathers.

(burudyu); the senanku comes to joke with the newborn and gently pulls his nose and ears.

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304 On the same day the blacksmith draws on the child's face the wolo ti, consisting of seven vertical frontal scars and two horizontal scars under each eye. The first scars represent the complete man (ni and dya); the second, representing the number two, symbol of

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1. A ngari ko le ye ngo (ngari is a word of the archaic language which expresses submission.)

Each person responds by striking their genital organs with the little finger: "It is well humiliated" (2).

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2. A ngari ko karu. The little finger is the symbol of the whole person; to strike with it is to acquiesce with all one's being.

They are led to the door of their home where the village elders of both sexes are gathered; they repeat their apologies to which the same response is given, accompanied by the same gesture of acquiescence.

[304] The chief of the Komo and three elders of his age grade who have never broken any taboos led them to the river bank where they undergo a new circumcision for the man and a new excision for the woman; the blood which is a gift to Faro must fall into the water. This operation is called "purification of the foreskin" (yiriyiri tige) and the pain suffered has an expiatory value.

The sixth day after the operation the members, gathered on the village square (3), dance and sing to the rhythm of the Komo, which

3. This ceremony, called daworo is comparable to that celebrated on the sixth day after circumcision.

is furiously beaten out, in the following words:

"Circumcised children, it is not good to break the taboo of the anus. I am telling you, Soma and members of the society, do not count their faults. Faro "(ter) (4).

4. (I ye ye) boloko dew tne tyẽ mañi boda la; nye fo aw ye somaw moko ka na jigi u la; faro (ter). That is to say, "forgive them." The word anus here replaces the word genitals which, according to propriety, is not spoken.

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2. Ni nya ke ɲyɛ̃ fla i ka n fa; ka kadi ka kago, gariseke bo fã ka cã; faro (ter).

The water swallowed after these words constitutes a solemn promise to Faro not to repeat the fault.

Next, they are carried home, the man by two members of the society and the woman by three of her companions, so that their toes, [824] the temporary lodging places of the spiritual principles which have returned to them, may not touch the impure earth. They remain three and four days, respectively, on their mats without making a movement. On the seventeenth day, with a thousand precautions, they may resume a more normal life, but they will be entirely free only when a birth occurring in the family will eliminate from their bodies the soul and the double of the dead child by transferring these to the newborn.

/199/ Death of an Uncircumcised Boy

763 When an uncircumcised boy is seriously ill the chief of the ndomo (1) has a rooster sacrificed in order to find out if recovery is possible.

1. See p. 222.

In the case of a negative response the children, taking turns night and day, go into the bush and sound off the ritual objects under the leadership of an initiate. In this way the soul of the dying boy is certain to be captured at the moment of death and channeled by the sound wave and led into the ritual objects themselves. Two initiates are posted near the home of the sick and, as soon as they learn of his death, they go to warn the children in the bush to make them stop playing. The chief sits down facing the west and recites a prayer; then he sacrifices the victims offered by the family.

766 Before the corpse is buried, it is circumcised, and the wanzo goes [804] to settle in the mask of the ndomo. During the night following the burial the members go to the fresh grave and sound the ritual instruments which contain the soul. Each year they repeat this action above the children's graves following the threshing of the harvest to "awaken the dead and to tell them that their souls are not lost."

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1. In this chapter we purposely do not approach the study of geomancy, which is reserved for later treatment. This mode of divination has been the object of a detailed description in C. Monteil, La Divination chez les Noirs de l'Afrique occidentale française /Divination among the Blacks of French West Africa/. Geomancy is currently used by the Bambara, by all the chiefs of religious societies, and by all the hunters who are familiar with several types, particularly the nama ti "sign of the hyena," the timba ti "sign of the aardvark," and the tyẽ dyẹ "white truth" or trabu. The symbols connected with this type of divination are very complex among the Bambara who state that they possess an autochthonous method of geomancy distinct from the type called "Moslem," with which they are also familiar. This last point seems to be confirmed by the observations gathered by B. Maupoil in Dahomey and explained in his conclusions (see La Géomancie à l'ancienne côte des Esclaves /Geomancy on the Old Slave Coast/, p. 678). Geomancy is practiced in similiar ways on the whole African continent. More than any other activity, its study raises the problem of influences, notably that of Islam, with which we have dealt on page 7.

Methods of Divination Linked to the Idea of the Person

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Knowledge of the person is a constant concern of the Bambara. The body, which supports the spiritual principles, is marked from birth by signs which any knowledgeable individual is capable of interpreting. They determine not only the character (tere) of a person but also, to a certain extent, the destiny that awaits him.

Thus by examining carefully the facial features of a newborn child, his hairline, the shape of his eyes, nose, and head, the lines on his

787 826 forehead, it is possible to predict to a great extent, what he will be or do in life. Later on /215/ the gait, the swinging of the arms, the way of placing the feet, of holding the head or the breasts will complete, for the informed people, the portrait sketched at birth.

Measurement of the dya

[804] Certain indications concerning the individual are also given by the double or twin (dya) (1) which materializes in the shadow of the body

1. See p. 86.

and is measured by using the little finger as a unit. Starting from the top of the head, this operation is undertaken at noon in the sun when the shadow is shortest. The measurements which are noted down are grouped alternatively by three, the male number, and by four, the female number, according to the following table:

1. The first three unit measures (little finger) represent the nerves, pasa (masc.).
2. From the fourth to the seventh, the soft parts, the flesh, bu (fem.).
3. From the eighth to the tenth, the bones, kolo (masc.).
4. From the eleventh to the fourteenth, the body liquids, dyi (fem.).
5. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth, the male genitals, wulu (masc.).
6. From the eighteenth to the twenty-first, the female genitals, bye (fem.).
7. From the twenty-second to the twenty-fourth, the joints, kolonye, (masc.).
8. From the twenty-fifth to the twenty-eighth, the breasts, ši (fem.).
9. From the twenty-ninth to the thirty-first, the backbone, koloko (masc.).
10. From the thirty-second to the thirty-fifth, the womb, dezo (fem.).
11. From the thirty-sixth to the thirty-eighth, the intelligence, hakili (masc.).

781 826 12. From the thirty-ninth to the forty-second, pettiness, stupidity, misenya, (fem.).

13. From the forty-third to the forty-fifth, judgment, calmness, basigi (masc.).

14. From the forty-fifth to the forty-ninth, incoherence, agitation, hakiliwuli (fem.).

[804] These groupings are symbolized by little sticks whose length increases for male measures and decreases for female measures.

Example: if the measure of the individual stops at group 7, he will be represented by four sticks (males) of increasing size and by three others (females) of decreasing size and different aspects.

/216/ Whatever their number, these sticks are then placed in the following manner: those of the nerves in a dry receptacle, those of the flesh in millet flour, those of the bones on a hard stone, those of the liquids in water, those of the male genitals on the testicles of a male goat, those of the female genitals on the vulva of a mare, those of the breasts in karite oil, those of the womb in water from the Niger or a well, those of the intelligence in fresh milk, those of calmness and judgment in water. On the stick representing the joints is shown the name for lion; on that representing the backbone, the word dyose, (literally, point of support); on that representing pettiness, the name for dung beetle; on that representing disorder and agitation, the words muso dãga (literally, accursed woman).

A prayer is recited over the sticks which are then grouped and counted with their numbered representation and their symbolism according to the complicated calculations whose details we will not enter upon here (1). This prayer and counting are called: faro

1. It must, nevertheless, be noted that the total of the signs is (7 x 3) + (7 x 4) or 49.

kanubaya, "love of Faro." They indicate his solicitude for his subjects and were supposedly revealed to men by the swallow messenger at the time of the first girl twins' birth.

781 826 843 Each of these measurements corresponds to a certain moral and physical behavior of man, predetermined by Faro before one's birth. It is therefore possible, by measuring the dya of a pregnant woman,

787 to know the sex of the child a woman is carrying and the character
826 which will be attributed to him by the spirit.
[843] Without further elaboration on this method of divination which implies a series of interpretations, it suffices to note that it is integrated into the system of Bambara thought and inspired by the conception he has of man's place in the universe.

Divination by the Kola Nut

787 The kola nuts which the Bambara eat and use in their sacrificial or divinatory rituals are classified into seven categories according to their form and color.

1. dangoro, red nut.
2. yeleworo, white nut.
3. sosokuworo (literally, mosquito head), a red nut pointed at one of its extremities.

/217/ 4. flaniworo (literally, twin kola), a white nut with the same signs on both its halves.

5. worodanda (literally, kola without a mouth), a nut of two colors without an apparent crack permitting it to be divided.
6. bassiworo, a dark red and very bitter nut.
7. nyeworo, a nut of light and indeterminate color.

The kola nut, "created for Faro's twin girls," is itself a symbol of duality, for both its adhering halves are easily separated. In daily life, unless the diviner has ordered it as a purification, a kola nut is not eaten by one person alone; it is divided and one of the halves given to a third person. This gesture of politeness and friendship is also the expression of the duality of man, comparable to that of the fruit itself.

[576] To give kola nuts is always a sign of deference, respect, or affection. To eat a white nut "chases away sorrow and worry." The nut without a crack is rarely eaten. As it appears to be of one piece, it has an inauspicious character. In religious ceremonies the bassiworo nuts are preferred for the boli; the ordinary red nuts, dangoro, for the other altars. The pointed nut, sosokuworo, is offered by one who wants a child. The officiator chews half the nut and spits it onto the altar before eating the other half.

776 latter animal which is imitated by the vukuri during the children's
825 nocturnal ritual described on page 65.

This new information confirms the observations noted on page 47, footnote 1, concerning the identity of the Bambara and Dogon representations. Moreover, the warableni, like the yurugu (Vulpes pallida) of the Dogon, intervenes in divination, particularly in geomancy. The investigations permit the extension of these representations to Sudanese tribes coming from Mandé (see p. 2), particularly, to the Bozo and the Peul.

Chapter 3

826 All Sudanese peoples originating in Mandé are characterized by the
773 seeds (or fish) contained in their collarbone, these varying from one
824 tribe to another. On the other hand, within a tribe, the theoretical content of the eight seeds, though roughly similar in terminology, differs in arrangement from family to family. Also the positions of the first and last seeds are reversed for men and women. Example: the blacksmiths have as their first seed the keninge and as their last the tikaninkuru, whereas the potters have as their first seed the tikaninkuru which they cultivate in the sacred fields (see p. 170) and as their last the keninge.

Moreover, after Mousso Koroni had stolen from Pemba the seeds he was entrusted to give on earth, Faro, through the intermediary of the /232/ animals who ate them at his order, reclaimed them from her; thus purified, he distributed them to men. The animal, which brought back to Faro the essential seed of each family, becomes the taboo, tne, of the family concerned, and the breaking of this taboo has the basic effect of removing the content of the culprit's collarbone. Analogous representations are noted among the Dogon.

Totemism, the so called "joking relationship" (senankuya of the Bambara), the caste system, and the exogamous laws of the Sudanese are based on the elements and classification of the contents of the collarbone.

Chapter 6

794 All the great adult institutions (dyo) are in contact with the
857 children's society of the Ndomo which reflects the universal organization
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*173 "As far as I am concerned, I ask as inheritance only my father's bow and arrows."

"Well, take them," exclaimed the irrepressible Kala-ké, "since you are our eldest brother and since we have no wish to quarrel, as did our father and his brothers."

"All right," replied Da through his griot, "but don't forget that you must keep our father's death secret and act just as you did when he was alive. This is indispensable for the success of my plans."

The fact was that Bani, the chief of Samba Nya-na, had remained invincible only because of the precious amulets [91] he possessed against Ma-n-son. These magic powers naturally would not work against Da; so if Da were able to attack Bani before the latter heard of Ma-n-son's death and was thus forewarned, Da would unquestionably triumph. This was all the more likely in view of the fact that Da had asked a marabout friend of his for a victory talisman. In order to prepare this talisman, the marabout required one of Bani's sandals and some hair from his beard.

In order to obtain these indispensable ingredients, Da bribed with gold a pretty woman, who went to Samba Nya-na with all the necessary instructions.

As soon as Bani saw the pretty woman, he begged persistently for her favors. When she had yielded, she made use of his confidence to get him drunk. Thus she easily obtained what she had come for, and the talisman could be made.

Now the remarkable thing is that, though Bani had always been forewarned by the people of Dina every time Ma-n-son was about to attack him, Da's approach so took him by surprise that he learned of it only when the enemy was before the village gates. This was the work of the magic talisman.

The village was taken and Bani, trying to flee on horseback, was captured by the griot, So-touma. Now Bani had auburn hair, one of those men whom the Bambara call Gon-bilé; they believe that if they put a red-haired man to death they incur the most frightful misfortunes. That is why Da merely removed Bani to Digon, where he died.

[82]

[119] Chapter 2

Concepts

1. Beliefs

195 826 The Bambara, like ourselves, has a sense of inner life and he expresses it in his language through figurative expressions which, in a sense, localize his sensations.

The eye, whose lens reflects everything that goes on around us, is, for the Bambara, a kind of mirror of the inner life: to be sad, nye na-fin, means "to have a somber eye"; to be cheerful, nye na-dye, means "to have a bright eye"; to be beaten down, nye na-koro, means "to have an eye that is old."

The head is the seat of decision, will and pride. To be active, kun' kene, is "to have an ardent head"; to be tenacious, kun' gwele, is "to have a hard head."

All emotional life is concentrated in the heart. A man who has proper feelings, a son' ka nyi, "has a good heart"; one who is bad, a son' ka dyugu, "has an evil heart." In a more general sense, anything that acts within (kono) us is a be n-kono, literally "it is within myself," meaning "I think, I intend, etc."

It is noteworthy that for these people life resides especially in two organs, the heart and the liver. The most solemn oath among them always contains the phrase: i ka n son' ni m bien' ta or "take my heart and my liver," that is, "destroy me, annihilate me, by removing these two knots of life."

774 195 In addition to these figurative expressions, which are common to [120] all languages, there are abstract terms which serve to express all that we imply in the words "life," "soul," etc. In Bambara, ni is "physical life," characterized by the drawing of breath (ni), which begins and ends with life. Dusu is emotional or moral life; si is duration, in the sense of living and also of becoming.

774 The Bambara does not conceive of a body's shadow as being caused by the interception of light by that body. For him

773 abandoned Faro to follow him. Faro vanquished him and punished men by giving them the joints used in manual labor, which all were forced to do. Births became single, but, in compensation, each being had a double, dya, which lived in water.

After these successive disorders, each of which, however, was followed by the acquisition of new knowledge or of a new technique, Faro again undertook Creation and reorganized the universe by a voyage to the ends of the earth. He established the system of the rains, and he classified living beings according to series, each series having a head of the list. Men thus were named and classed by race and by caste, beginning with the slaves. He gave men the eight cereal seeds which remain the basis of their subsistence and which are forever in [826] their clavicles. Finally, he controls all existence and acts of beings placed under his domination.

The present order is only a phase in space and time. Twelve waters are still hidden; they must in the future, on the order of Faro, rise and spread in the world. They will make known the words of the future, and the world conceived by Yo will be realized.

776 All this mythology is presently represented by numerous objects 778 which serve as props for the different rituals regulating men's lives.

Pemba in represented in the houses of the religious chiefs and heads of families by a wooden block named Pembele, image of the first thick plank (1). In a [83] central hollow, symbolizing the tomb,

1. See S. de Ganay, "Aspects de mythologie et de symbolique bambara" [Aspects of Bambara Mythology and Symbolism]. [Ed., J. psych. norm. et path., Vol. 42 (1949), pp. 181-201.]

are engraved three times 22 marks representing Pemba the creator, the transmission of his Word, and his power to Faro, the token of his foreknowledge of all things, etc. Pembele is an altar guaranteeing the prosperity and life of the group.

776 If the balanza tree no longer is the object of a cult, the Bambara still regard it with a special attitude, which recalls its former role. Mousso Koroni is the impure and untilled land; the agricultural techniques she taught are a partial reparation for the disorders she created. This farm work wounds and purifies the land at the same

776 time; it is the noblest work, and one to which every member of the Bambara race must be subject. Faro is represented by a spiral, munu; the vibrating movements of the spiral are the same that animate the daily movements of the sun. These movements are materialized in a basket-work headdress, yugu, which has eight whorls and which formerly was reserved for kings. Faro's face is white, because he took it from the spirit of the air, Teliko, who was an albino. His ears are protected by two fins; his hands are of different sex; his tail is palmate, and his breast is of copper. Albinos and copper are the spirit's preferred sacrifices. All atmospheric manifestations denote his presence; his principal seat is the Niger River, but he has the gift of ubiquity and haunts all waters. Faro is accompanied by helpers, the most representative of whom is the bolokuruni, one-armed blacksmith of a black race. His air messenger is the swallow, who carries the
824 fertilizing word. Certain plants are in permanent rapport with him: the Yayalẽ, the Ngoyõ (tomato), which is compared to blood. Thus, small fields of tomatoes reserved for the cult of Faro are cultivated in each village. All metals are reserved for Faro. The Bozo, born of Faro's first twins, enjoy a privileged position because they were not subject to the defilement caused by Mousso Koroni and can enter into direct communication with the spirit. In addition, they are the masters of the water.

776 The cult of Faro includes a whole series of taboos, such as the
784 black earth of the river which may not be used by the potters and
841 butter which may not be kept in water. But the principal taboo is menstrual blood, originally provoked by the disorders of Mousso Koroni.

B. Conception of Man

774 The Bambara conceive man as a microcosm, a resumé of the
761 totality of beings and things. The principle of duality contained in the original creative thought is realized in man by his twin souls which compensate for the separation of the sexes. In man, Faro is represented by the ni (soul) and the dya (double). Pemba is represented by the téré (the character, force, and conscience) and the nyama (which is the téré when it leaves its corporeal support after
826 death). Mousso Koroni is represented by the Wanzo (evil force with

[826] 774 761 its seat in the prepuce and the clitoris, necessitating circumcision and excision). The body is conceived as being the support of all spiritual forces; each part is distinctly known [84] for its particular role. The body, like the spiritual principles, is bisexual; the boy [304 831] is feminine in his prepuce, the girl masculine in her clitoris, and it is only after circumcision and excision that the man and woman can unite and realize the original fruitful twinship. On the metaphysical plane, there is identity between man, "seed of the world," and the cereal seed; the basic nutriments that are made up of the eight principal cereals are represented symbolically in men's clavicles. 775 761 Finally, death separates all of these elements composing the person. The dya remains in the water where it will become the ni of the new-born in the family of the deceased; the ni is caught by the family head and transported to the altar where it will animate the dya of the new-born; the téré becomes nyama, a dangerous and vengeful force; it is deposited on the pembele, where it rejoins the ancestral forces. The body is buried and belongs to the termites. At birth, all the spiritual forces are transmitted again, whole, "refreshed," and purified. One being replaces another until the final resurrection.

C. Ritual, Sacrifice, and Cults

782 To appeal to and influence the spiritual forces, the Bambara use prayer, offerings, and sacrifices. Oral rites are used everywhere and at any time. "They pray to the sky, the cardinal points, the spirits; they sacrifice on stones, on the ground, on trees, by water holes, just as on altars sheltered in the sanctuaries or situated in public or private places. Every circumcized adult, father of a family, owner of a home and cultivatable land, is a sacrificer, a capacity [531] emphasized by the red spot which sometimes is an ornament of the walls of the principal room in the man's residence." (1)

1. G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

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the blacksmith. The doll is given the name of the dead infant, the
[304 child carries it with him to the circumcision, and, when he marries,
589 he buries the doll with a piece of wood representing the wife of the deceased.

845 Twins are replicas of Faro, their presence is beneficial, and they are considered invulnerable.

826 The albino is supposed to be the issue of sexual relations held
833 in sunlight, a breach of taboo. He, too, is a new being. His wanzo
904 is so active that the circumciser must take great precautions before operating on it.

826 He is considered to be endowed with special powers which
782 make him a choice victim for the sacrifices offered to the spirit of the water.

553 To the children of blacksmiths, the name is given near the
326 paternal forge in the presence of all the artisans. An old man prepares seven little sticks, giving each the name of an ancestor. Three of these are drawn at random from the group, and the third gives the name of the baby. The head of the baby is rubbed with the axe Kongobwona, and his shaved hair is soaked in sacrificial blood.

553 In the Bamako region two chickens or a sheep are sacrificed
782 to celebrate the name-giving. The distribution of the meat is made according to established custom. If it is a chicken, the patriarch receives the head and the gizzard, while the wing and white meat go to the old woman who washed the baby during the first eight days. If it is a sheep, the patriarch receives [91] the ribs (because they are a bulwark, and the patriarch is the defender of the village) and the heart; the blacksmith receives the shoulder; the infant's family gets the head (so that the infant will go ahead), the back (symbol of prosperity), and the limbs (supports one wishes the new-born to have); the blood which runs on the ground is destined for the infant's protective ancestors. Then the family divides the raw meat with the heads of family, and the old woman thus receives her part indirectly.

c. Circumcision

881 A male infant is born, but he still keeps (because of the
304 primordial twinship) the prepuce as the physical support of the female
831 sex. He will only be freed of this by circumcision. It is this operation that definitively determines his sexual qualification and renders him fit to contract marriage.

[i.e., the surviving child of twins. -Analyst]

881 and the member is held up by a split millet stalk. The prepuces are
304 buried, and their white bonnets are put on the circumcised. The place of the operation is forbidden to women and to the non-circumcised who could take the liberated wanzo.

In the Bamako region the blood of the oldest is gathered in
[534] two new calabashes, which are later broken and the pieces used to make sistrums, sinzin.

881 After the ceremony, the children retire for three months under the direction of a priest of the Komo. During this period, when they receive a religious and technical education, they enter the village only to sleep in a special house and to repair the roofs of their teachers' huts.

[794] The night before the sixth day after the operation, they are initiated in the Komo. The next day they are led to the river where they wash their wound. Meals are taken together, followed by songs and dances, until they are healed. The last day, the sistrums, sticks, mats, and everything that has been in contact with the circumcised are put in a pile and burned. Each child jumps over the fire three times and runs home, without turning around, to lose his wanzo definitively. In the Bamako region the sistrums are preserved in the cabin of the village chief and will be used for the children of the following years. The bonnet is returned to the mother and will be preserved until death. The next day the child puts on his new clothes.

881 Let us note that for the circumcision of twins all the offerings
304 for the ceremony and the sacrifices must be doubled, and each child
826 will possess two sistrums. Finally, the albinos today are sent to the dispensary, because the blacksmiths are afraid to operate on them, their wanzo being particularly dangerous.

304 Circumcision may take place posthumously. The circumciser
766 then cuts the left ear of the body, since the wanzo freed by death would be dangerous to the living.

794 Generally, a sort of ceremony of confirmation of membership in the Komo takes place in the year following the circumcision.

d. Excision

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304 The excision of the girls has a meaning equivalent to that
[83] of the circumcision of the boys. The operation frees them of the physical male factor residing in the clitoris.

584 She returns to her own family every year at the beginning of the rainy season and goes back to her future in-laws at the start of the dry season.

583 Every year she takes home 30 kola nuts and three cocks, and
584 the young man's fa begins to pay the bride price which traditionally came to eight oxen and five sheep. The girl returns at the dry season bringing fonio, fruits of the karite, and sumbalé (for making sauces), and other products.

583 She is married after the appearance of the first menses, and
585 her husband continues to pay the bride price in the following order: a cow, a bull, a heifer . . .

583 Throughout the engagement period, the young man must
584 cultivate the field of his future parents-in-law.

583 Among the Bambara who currently practice the exchange of young girls between two families for marriage purposes, the compensation is no longer paid, although gifts and contributions are still given.

584 On the day of the marriage the girl is accompanied by an
585 attendant who represents her twin, while the young man also is aided by an attendant, and the two couples symbolize the union of the two couples of [94] primordial twins. Finally, the young girl is carried up to the abode constructed for her by her husband. She is followed by a cortege of seven women, each carrying part of the bride's gifts. The investigation being carried out by Mme. Dieterlen in the Bambara country indicates that the seven women represent the seven [824] seeds that each man possesses in his clavicles; the bride is the fonio seed that is brought to the husband's village, for marriage is considered to be a cultivation.

The marriage of twins requires slightly different rites. When the twins are not of the same sex, the boy must deflower the girl before she marries (there is only one intercourse). If the twins are two boys, the first to marry must let his wife have relations with his twin. If the twins are girls, the husband of the first to be married must also unite with the second.

f. Death and Funerals

761 Death dissociates the different elements which make up the
764 person. The purpose of the funeral rites is to gather the spiritual

3. The Reincarnation of Souls

775 It is a great surprise that the Bambara believe in the reincarna-
769 tion of souls. Some do not dare to believe in it because they sacrifice to the shades of their ancestors, and others, "cultivated minds, nourished by the sanest philosophy," reject this belief as illogical, since the religion of the Negro is the worship of the dead! They do, in fact, worship the dead, but in the Bambara religion this worship, extensive as it is, remains a detail, and not the foundation. To honor the shades of his ancestors (but only of those who were heads of families, so that the worship of the dead is already somewhat limited -- with all due respect to those who see nothing but it), the Bambara family head throws a big blot of chicken blood and a mouthful of chewed kola nut onto the dégé, or millet flour mixed with water, and pours it onto the wall at the entrance of his hut. He does so to implore the help and protection of that power or authority which his predecessors possessed in their position as family head, an authority exactly the same as that which he himself possesses. He believes, nonetheless, in the reincarnation of souls! This belief is general and universal among fetishists, and if some do not dare admit it before Europeans and
[576] Moslems, their reticence is due to simple human respect, to a fear of contradicting beliefs which they know to be contrary to their own, a wish not to offend anyone and not to be the butt of laughter and ridicule.

766 Infants who die at the breast before having achieved the use of
775 reason are buried in a corner of the inner courtyard and sometimes even in the hut where they were born. Before such a child is buried, one of its limbs, usually the big toe of the right foot, is broken, and sometimes the father marks it with a knife on /57/ the shoulder, the arm, or the chest. He thinks that the child who will come after it will be animated by the soul of the dead one, and he neglects nothing that might possibly enable him to ascertain whether it is. This stupid and ridiculous operation is commonly performed under the eyes of the mother, and some strange events occur. Since she must submit
775 to the will of her husband as soon as possible and have marital relations
826 with him, she soon conceives. During her pregnancy her imagination

775 may be active and in her dreams she may dwell on the events which
826 accompanied the burial of her dead child. Thus, she sometimes gives birth to an infant which has the marks made by the father. Such occurences contribute not a little to "confirm" the Bambara's belief in reincarnation of souls. At Wélengéla, on the road from Ségou to Sens, there was a Negro who had a cleft upper lip from birth, and the people of the village were unanimous in giving the reason. His mother had given birth only to sickly and puny infants, all of whom died within few weeks. At the death of the last one the father, furious, cut his lip with a stroke of the knife. When he returned to life, the child did not want to take back the lip that his father had removed! I have seen others who from birth had a sort of tattoo on the back, chest, or arms, and the parents of each did not hesitate to tell me that it was the mark made on his deceased older brother.

775 Children born after a deceased sister or brother are given a
551 special name; it would seem that the Negroes seek to make the soul of this small being feel how inconsiderate he was toward his parents in coming into the world and immediately leaving, after having kindled both love and hope in their hearts. Perhaps they also think to put on a good countenance before their fellows, for it is a great disgrace not to have children or to have only children who die at birth. Both theories are plausible, and the second would only be an expression of humility disguising a secret hope. The names most frequently given to these latecomers are: Malobali, "shameless one"; Ta fli, "go throw it away"; Foui té, "he is nothing"; Fou, "nothing"; etc. -- If the first theory that I propose is accepted these names would be translated as follows: "Are you not ashamed (i.e., to come into the world only to leave it so soon)?" -- "Might just as well throw you away, bury you (i.e., for all the time /58/ you spend among us)." -- "You are no good /literally, in French: "a being of nothing"/ (you are but a heartless one, you who come to us only to leave us in a short time)." -- "That is nothing." A Negro blowing on the palm of his hand gives us the full meaning of this word; the gesture translates his thought: "You are no more to us than nothing, are you not like a breath that passes and disappears?"

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3. Bisatjila, those who flagellate themselves.

4. Woni sama, those who scratch themselves with thorns.

used by the korodouga (5) to drive away the sparks crackling on the

5. Korodouga, clowns, storytellers /griots/ of the sect.

backs of the tatougoula.

7. Burial of the Excommunicated

766 Those with sores, lepers, and persons killed by a fetish who did not accept their sacrifice may be said to be excommunicated. No adult who dies without hair on his head or body has the right to the honor of a Bambara burial, and he is given that of lepers.

A leper is never buried in the common cemetery; he is sent far off into the bush to a separate place. The more usual custom, actually, is to slip the corpse into a hollow baobab (Adansonia digitata) with a small, live pullet as companion -- or an egg, if the deceased is a girl. The same fate befalls a bald person.

The reason for this custom is that this class of people have been abandoned by the Creator and the spirits, all of whom scorn them and withdraw from them. If ever the ground where ancestors rest should receive the remains of one of these accursed ones, their bones would shake with disgust. Moreover, they would take revenge for having to rest near people who during their lifetime were without hair; they would be deaf to every prayer and would refuse every sacrifice. The village and the entire region there would suffer a total lack of rain, a drought without any equal, in short, a famine with all its horrors. /231/